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CHILE-US:

Strained Relations

Chilean officials believe relations with the US will continue to deteriorate.

_____ bilateral tensions have risen since the burning incident involving two youths—one a longtime US resident—and because of US criticism of President Pinochet's performance on human rights and delay of a transition to civilian rule. _____ Chilean officials have reacted sharply to the criticism, and some have called publicly for the removal of the US Ambassador because he attended the funeral of one of the burning victims last month. _____

Comment: Santiago is likely to show irritation by imposing new visa requirements on US visitors and administratively harassing US diplomats. Chilean officials also probably will continue their public criticism of the US Ambassador and carefully monitor his contacts with opposition groups. _____

Pinochet, who tends to be obstinate in the face of pressure, is not heeding advisers who favor human rights and political reforms. He apparently is trying to protect his standing with rightwing groups, the business community, and the military through nationalistic appeals and claims that the US is interfering in Chile's internal affairs. He probably will eventually approve at least cosmetic human rights changes and announce his intention to make political reforms such as legalizing parties, however, because he hopes to head off unfavorable UN action and US opposition to new loans to Chile. _____

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